

Catch Up by MortalThread

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Summary:

A graduation party. A late guest. Pool side talks.

This is not how Steve pictured this night going. And he's pleasantly surprised.

Catch Up

Steve runs his fingers along the sharp edge of the cardstock. The smooth paper bends slightly under his touch and he runs his fingers along the slightly raised ink. He lets his eyes drift over his name, address, and graduation party date. Underneath, in slightly faded black pen, a hastily and barely legibly scrawled “Can’t attend with regrets” sits on the RSVP line.

He sighs, tossing the envelope and invite onto the desk, next to the wrapped gift.

He turns back to his mirror, adjusting the collar on his polo. He picks up his belt, sliding it through the loops on the light khaki shorts and then slides into some deck shoes. He rolls the cuffs on the shorts, and then slides a hand through his hair, sitting on the edge of the bed.

He can hear the party starting downstairs, and he looks up into his mirror, catching his own eyes. He sighs again, then stands, wiping his hands on his thighs.

He opens his door, coming to stand at the top of the stairs. He can hear his mother’s laughter, the doorbell, the sounds of pots and pans banging, and his father discussing business in the closest room. He steps down the stairs, plastering on a fake smile.

“STEVEN! THERE YOU ARE!”

He tries to smile a little wider as he’s pulled into some embrace from an aunt he hasn’t seen in years and his dad slaps him on the back as he passes. His mother grins at him from her corner of the kitchen, licking her thumb as she places something on the table covered in icing and he thanks people as they pass him cards and a few small gifts. He sets them on the table, looking out into the backyard, and sees a few of his cousins running around the pool. He can smell the grill going, and he nods at some other relatives.

He starts when he feels a hand on his back. He turns, seeing his mother. She adjusts the collar again, smooths his hair and pulls

him toward the stove.

“I know that face. What’s wrong?”

He looks over into the pot she has going, and shoves an index finger into it, scooping some of her homemade warm potato salad into his mouth. She fixes him with a look, lightly slapping him on the shoulder, then her face softens.

“Seriously, Steven. What’s wrong?”

He shrugs, shaking his head. “Nothing. Just. Someone who I wanted to come can’t make it.”

She nods, wiping her hands on a dishtowel. She rubs his shoulder, giving him a soft smile. He offers one back, and then turns, leaning back against the stove. He drums his fingers along the cool white metal of it, looking out over the small crowd of relations.

“Well, you have all weekend to see your friends. Deal with your family tonight. They’re not so bad.”

Steve rolls his eyes, but relents when his mother gives him a quick kiss on the cheek and a pat on his hair. He pushes off from the stove and makes his way over to his dad. His dad pulls him into a side hug, and goes on about how proud he is of his son. Steve listens half-heartedly, watching everything around him. He leans forward, grabbing some chips from a bowl on the table, and waves to a few of his cousins outside. They gesture for him to come outside and he nods to his dad. He shakes the hands of his dad’s colleagues and heads to the sliding door.

Once outside, he grabs himself a beer and settles himself by the pool, removing his shoes and sinking his feet into the water up to his calves.

He smiles, watching the younger ones run around, and shields his face as some of the younger teens cannonball into the pool. He laughs as one of his nephews comes and sits on his lap, and he’s drenched in chlorinated water as the little guy wraps arms around his neck.

He takes a swig of his beer, and tries to enjoy himself.

The night goes by in a blur of burgers, beers, and cake. He lets his relatives hug him and give him graduation presents and accolades. They ask him about college and he manages to bullshit his way through several conversations, going on about his preferred schools. He makes his dad smile when he mentions Ivy Leagues, and possibly going into law. He makes his grandmother happy by talking about coming to visit her for the summer. He makes his mother happy by talking about his friends and the sweet girl he dated named Nancy who couldn't make it to the party. He makes his cousins happy by playing around with them and tossing them into the pool.

He eventually finds the house empty and his mother cleaning up the kitchen. He grabs a trash bag and helps, neither talking. She gives him a smile and a pat on the shoulder, and he sees his dad out back cleaning up the grill.

“We’re going to the Fielder’s house tonight. Did you want to come?”

Steve shakes his head. “I think I’m gonna just hit the hay early.”

She gives him a soft look, and he shrugs.

“I’ll be fine. Thanks for all of this, today, by the way. It was fun. Really nice.”

“You’re welcome, sweetie.”

She passes him, giving him a kiss on the cheek as she goes, and he ties up the trash bag. He sets it out near the trashcans outside, and digs into the cooler, cold shooting up his fingers from the ice cold water. He finds the metal of a can, and pulls it out, popping the tab on the beer. He can hear his parents shuffling inside and talking quietly. He plops himself into one of the lounging chairs by the pool and stretches his legs out. He hears the slam of the car doors and sees the headlights by the gate. He waits until they pull out the driveway

and then digs in his pocket for his cigarettes. He pulls the pack out. He pulls the tab on the wrapper and smacks it against his palm a few times, packing them, and then slips a hand back into his pocket, finding his lighter. He lights one up, taking a deep drag, and lets his other arm dangle over the side of the chair, beer hanging from his fingers.

He shuts his eyes, listening to the sound of Hawkins around him.

He goes through three more cigarettes and two more beers before he checks his watch and realizes two hours have passed. It's nearing eleven, and he sighs, letting his head loll back against the cushion of the lounge chair. He listens to the quiet hum of the pool system and looks out on the water as steam rises from it. He rolls up the bag of chips he's demolished and sets it beside his chair.

He hums softly to himself as he takes another sip of beer and ashes the cigarette. He looks over his arm, seeing a small pile of ashes beside him, and he leans over, blowing on it, and watching as it scurries toward the edge of the pool and into the cracks of the concrete.

He sighs, sitting up, feels his head swim a little bit, and then heads over to the edge of the pool. He slides out of his shoes again, slipping his feet into the heated water and sighs, leaning back onto the cool concrete. He feels it pull against the pique fabric of his polo, and he swings his feet in the water, listening as the water laps around his skin.

He stares up into the sky, seeing the moon haloed by the clouds, and finds he can spot a few stars against the black canvas. He can hear strains of another party down the street and muted shrieking laughter reaches his ears. He sighs, shutting his eyes again.

They shoot open again when he hears the latch on the wooden gate click and he sits up on his elbows. The concrete digs into his skin, and he places his palms carefully flat. He tilts his head, watching the gate slowly open, and then feels his eyes widen when

he sees a thin figure poke its head around. A shock of dark blond hair appears and Steve feels his heart start racing.

“Hey,” he manages.

The head pops up, and Jonathan Byers offers him a short wave, shutting the gate behind him. He steps fully into Steve’s sight, and Steve can’t stop the grin spreading over his face. Jonathan is carrying his bag, adjusting the strap as he looks around the backyard. Steve waves him over, patting the concrete beside him. Jonathan ducks his head, smile on his face and slips to sit beside him. Steve is still grinning as he takes in the nametag still pinned to the black tee shirt. He gestures to it.

“Just coming from work?”

Jonathan nods, fingers flying up to pluck the tag from his shirt. He reaches into the collar, pulling the magnet out from behind the fabric and stuffs it into a pocket on the front of his bag.

“How was it? Sorry I missed it.”

Steve shrugs.

“It wasn’t terrible. Relatives showed up.” He lays back down on the concrete. “How was work?”

Jonathan shrugs, smirking. “Boring.”

Steve grins up at him. “You want a beer?”

Jonathan sighs, shutting his eyes and nodding, and Steve laughs. He stands up, leaving wet footprints as he goes to the cooler and digs out two fresh beers. He presses one into Jonathan’s outstretched hand and watches as he pops the tab and takes a deep swig. He sighs deeply, nodding. Steve pats him on the shoulder and slips his legs back into the pool, popping the tab on his own can.

“Glad you came over,” he says, tipping his can at Jonathan. The other boy knocks his against it.

“Happy graduation.”

“Same to you.”

Jonathan gives a soft laugh and Steve watches as he picks at a loose string on the cut off denim shorts he has on, one finger playing with the rolled cuff. Steve swallows a gulp of beer and leans forward on his thighs. Jonathan waves a hand and goes for his bag, bobbing his head, and Steve cranes his neck. He watches him toss the flap open and dig through it for a moment. He makes a soft noise as he finds what he’s looking for and produces two small packages, hastily wrapped in newspaper, and offers them to Steve.

“What’s this?”

Jonathan just shoves the packages at him again, and smiles. Steve shakes his head.

“Seriously. You didn’t have to.”

“Yeah. I did. Open them.”

Steve feels something in his chest unfurl when he takes them from Jonathan’s hand, and sees him bite his lip. He watches as he ducks his head again, drinking. Steve stares at him for a moment, then carefully begins to unwrap the first package.

It’s hefty in his hands, small and square. He pulls back a corner of the paper, revealing a glossy black surface, and he looks at Jonathan again, before continuing. He pulls the paper off the sides of it, finding the edges of black pages. It’s a small binder, and he likes how it fits in his hands.

“Open it.”

Steve glances at him, and then sets the paper aside. He opens the little binder, and he sees glossy printed photos, one on each page, staring up at him. He flips through them, seeing the kids, himself, Nancy, Hopper, Eleven, even Bob and Max. He smiles at the memories, finding the picture of himself, Jonathan and Nancy, and runs his fingers over it. He opens to the final page, and sees one of just himself and Jonathan. He bites down on his lip, shaking his head.

“This. This is amazing. When did you find the time to do this...”

Jonathan shrugs. “Had some time after school. Found the negatives, and decided you might want some of them.”

“I didn’t have any pictures of us all together, so yeah, man. This. I love it. Thank you.”

He lets his fingertips drift of the shot of himself and Jonathan, sees both of their smiling faces, and the casual arms draped over each other. They’re sitting against a railing, and Steve’s arm is around Jonathan’s waist. He remembers it from after a bonfire, and he can recall the smell of smoke and the woods as he looks at it. He feels the happiness from the night in his chest and he looks at Jonathan, grinning.

“Seriously. Thank you.”

“Still got one more,” Jonathan says, gesturing with the beer can toward the smaller package.

“This was enough.”

Jonathan shakes his head. “This is just something I thought of. I don’t know if you’ll like it.”

Steve makes a noise, then unwraps the smaller package. A small plastic cassette tape sits in his hands. “Steve’s Mix” is written in that same scrawling handwriting that had been on the RSVP.

“You made me a mix tape.”

Jonathan lowers his head. “Yeah. I mean. It’s. I just always made them for Will, and thought maybe. I don’t know.”

He wags his can, and sets it beside him, empty. Steve turns the tape over in his hands, and that hot feeling in his chest returns.

“What’s on it?”

“Listen and find out.”

Steve laughs, shoving at him lightly. “You know why this is perfect?”

Jonathan shakes his head, sharing in the grin.

“Just stay here for a moment.”

He stands, taking off shakily into the house and runs up the stairs. He goes to his desk, shoving the invite aside, and grabs the wrapped gift. He hefts the box, staring out the window. He sees Jonathan sitting by the pool, pulling his legs up under him to sit cross-legged. Steve smiles, then runs back downstairs. He digs in the drawer for a few batteries and then makes his way back out to Jonathan, shutting the door behind him. He grabs two more beers and juggles it all as he sits beside him. He hands him the can first, sets his own beside him, then lets the batteries fall to his side. He hands him the package.

Jonathan stares at him wide-eyed.

“Open it!”

Steve waits, watching him slowly unwrap the neat packaging. Jonathan’s eyes widen as the paper gives way and Steve can’t stop himself from smiling.

“Steve, this is too much. I can’t take this.”

“Yes, you can.”

Jonathan shakes his head, trying to hand him back the box. Steve pushes it gently back toward him.

“I love mine. I wanted you to have one. I know you and your music and I thought, you know, the train ride to New York is pretty long from here. Figured you’d might like the company.”

He watches as Jonathan lovingly runs his hands over the sleek box of the Walkman, turning it this way and that, reading the sides and biting his lip.

“Steve-”

“Happy graduation, man.”

“The camera...then this...”

“Dude, the camera was *ages* ago.”

Jonathan gives him an unreadable look, and Steve waves the tape at him. Jonathan opens the box, sliding the tab out, and pulls the wrapped Walkman out. He fumbles with the headphones for a moment before unwrapping the actual device. Steve watches long fingers twist it, testing the buttons and finally finding the release on the deck. The little window pops open and Steve hands him the tape. He holds his hand out, and Jonathan hands him the player, leaning toward Steve as he pushes two batteries into it.

“It’s all set.”

Jonathan grins at him, closer now, and Steve looks down at his face, watching the reflection from the pool play on his features. There’s a pale cast to the one side of his face, and Steve lets his eyes drift to the dimples, the childhood scar Will had given him in his right eyebrow, the barest shadow of stubble on his skin, and finally down to his lips. Steve pulls his eyes away, licking his own, and hands him back the player.

Jonathan scoots closer to him, a scrape of denim on concrete. He holds the headphones out to him. Steve ducks his head, leaning in, and he waits as Jonathan presses play.

He shuts his eyes, grinning to himself as The English Beat’s “Save It For Later” begins. He lets the drum beat wash over him, and he opens his eyes, seeing Jonathan laughing, eyes shut, all teeth and dimples. Steve leans a shoulder into him, watching him mouth the words to the song.

He feels him lean against him, pressing into him and humming along with the music. He’s warm, and it’s all Steve can do to not throw an arm around him. He waits out the rest of the song, keeping time with his fingers on his thighs, and watches, just watches Jonathan as he falls into the music.

When the song ends, Steve stands, going back to the cooler and grabbing another beer. He hands it to Jonathan and flops down next to him, sticking his legs back in the water. Jonathan fiddles with the can for a moment, huffing a soft laugh. Steve glances at him.

“What?”

“Nothing. I just never thought I’d be sitting here. After we’ve graduated. Having a beer-“

“Listening to music. With me,” Steve finishes, smile spreading across his face.

Jonathan only shrugs halfheartedly, quirking a half smile. Steve reaches out, shoving him lightly.

“But it’s true. I just. Glad to have you around, man.”

Steve swings his feet in the water, suddenly giddy. “You, too, man.”

Jonathan sighs, then looks down at Steve’s legs in the water. He pulls his knees up, unlacing the ratty Converse sneakers, and slips out of them. He slides his own feet into the water, and Steve splashes at his leg casually.

“Water’s warm.”

“We have a heater. Does pretty good in August when it starts getting too cold to swim.”

Jonathan nods. He takes a deep swig of the beer and Steve leans back on the concrete. He feels one of Jonathan’s ankles brush his and he knocks it gently. He hears him laugh softly, and he giggles, leaning all the way back until he’s flat on the ground.

“How many of these have you had?”

Steve raises a hand, counting. “Um. Five? Maybe? Not sure. All I know is you have some catching up to do.”

Jonathan lays flat beside him, shoving an arm under his

head. Steve can feel him, side pressing against his own, and he can hear the quiet sigh he lets out. He moves a little closer to him, shoulder knocking into his. He can tell they're mirroring each other: opposite arms under their heads, and other hands on their chests. He feels content in that thought, turning his head to look at him.

Jonathan is still beside him, chest rising and falling easily, eyes shut and lips barely parted. The barest twitch of his fingers on his chest or adjustment of his head, and Steve isn't sure if it's the beer, but he's captivated. He watches as strands of dark blond slip down his ear, and he lets his eyes drift to the scar on his cheek. He reaches up to touch it, running a fingertip over it. He holds his breath, waiting for the start. But it never comes. Jonathan only turns his head a little, smiling at him, looking as relaxed as he's ever seen him.

“What?”

“Looks like the scar’s finally fading a bit.”

Jonathan purses his lips, nodding. He brings his hand up, running it over the scar.

“That was a hell of an ordeal,” he mutters.

Steve hums in agreement. “Remember Max that night?”

Jonathan laughs. “That kid is gonna get herself killed. I worry about her more than the guys.”

“I still can’t get over the war cry and then just rushing at it like a linebacker. El looked like she didn’t know what to do.”

Jonathan laughs harder, nodding. “And then Dustin-“

Steve laughs. “Fucking Dustin...Oh, my god. And Mike? Just screaming at it?”

“Yeah! Like that was gonna do anything. God, that was such a mess.”

Steve rolls onto his front. “What did we call that thing

again?"

Jonathan rolls his eyes skyward for a moment, running a hand through his hair.

"Uh...I think. Will called it the Morkoth?" He trails off into laughter. "It's a Dungeons and Dragons monster."

Steve giggles into his arm. He kicks his feet in the water behind him. "Like the Demogorgon."

Jonathan nods, turning his head to grin at him.

"They've named them all after them."

Steve sobers for a moment, letting his eyes drift to Jonathan's collarbone. The tail end of a thick scar peeks out above the collar of his shirt and Steve remembers there's another one on his side. He slides a hand down, finding the scar under the thin fabric and Jonathan twitches under the touch. When Steve glances up, he sees him swallowing thickly and looking straight up. He continues to run his finger the length of the scar, feeling it grow thinner as he stops right above his hipbone. He lifts his hand, finding the branch of it trailing up across his stomach.

A hand stops his, but doesn't move it from its position. Instead, Jonathan lets him rest his hand on his stomach and Steve drops his head to his arm.

"What did they call the thing that almost killed you?"

"Masher," Jonathan whispers.

Steve raises his head, nodding. "Appropriate."

He looks over when he feels Jonathan cover his hand with his own, and then shuts his eyes again.

"Fit the bill. Slimy, looked like an eel, poison barbs...matched the manual."

Steve shudders at the memory. He curls his fingers in

Jonathan's shirt, the metallic tang of blood in his nose and the slick feel of it between his hands. He sometimes hears Jonathan's screams at night.

“Steve?”

He blinks, shaking his head. “We almost lost you that night.”

Jonathan's fingers tighten around his.

“I don't remember much of it, honestly. No one really wants to tell me, either.”

Steve glances up, meeting his eyes. Dark brown, nearly black in the dim light, stare into his own.

He sighs. “What *do* you remember?”

Jonathan shrugs, a short twitch of his shoulders on the concrete.

“I remember being thrown into a tree. I remember screaming. I remember being hot. I remember pain. And I...I remember you.”

Steve bites his lip. “Me?”

Jonathan turns his eyes on him, intent. “I remember looking up at you. You were saying something. I think I was in your lap?”

Steve nods, biting his lip hard enough to draw blood.

“You...Okay.” He sits up on his elbows, never withdrawing his hand from Jonathan's shirt. “That *thing* got you, tossed you into the tree. It fucking *played* with you, like some kind of toy. Dug those things into...”

He trails off, sliding his hand out from under Jonathan's and tracing the scars.

“It dragged one down. Cut you all the way from here-” he traces, “-to here.”

Jonathan shivers under his touch as he finds his hip.

“You were bleeding so bad. And these...black veins were like, running up all over the place...and God, if El hadn’t been there to get the poison out...You were sick for a few days after that, but you were safe once she got it all out of your system.”

Jonathan is staring at him, and Steve runs a hand through his hair.

“You kept me from bleeding out.”

Steve lowers his head, nodding. “I didn’t know what else to do. I couldn’t lose you, man.”

Jonathan makes a soft noise, grabbing his hand. Steve feels his breath catch when he slips it up under his shirt, over the scar. Steve can feel the raised ridges of skin and he exhales deeply, shakily. He’s warm and the surrounding skin soft, unmarred.

Steve shuts his eyes, remembering the feel of him in his lap, screaming and clawing at his shirt. He remembers the sharp gasps for breath and dampness in the air. He remembers the feel of the blood-soaked shirt in his hands, trying to keep pressure on the wounds. He remembers pressing his cheek to his, trying to calm him, free arm wrapped tightly around him, fear washing cold over his entire body.

He snaps back when he feels a hand in his hair.

“Never got to thank you for that.”

Steve tilts his head, letting short nails scrape at his scalp, and he swallows, feeling something change in the air. Jonathan is staring at him, the barest affectionate smile on his face. Steve feels him card his hand through his hair.

“Well, you’re welcome. Also, thank you for saving my ass. Several times.”

Jonathan huffs a soft laugh and Steve smirks, tilting his head again as Jonathan slides blunt nails over his scalp. He sighs, leaning into it.

They lapse into silence, Steve enjoying the feel of his hand in his hair, and the warmth of the skin under his palm. He skims a hand experimentally over the scar again, and he feels him twitch. He tries it again, this time running his fingers nearly up to his ribs and Jonathan makes a soft noise, eyes fluttering shut. He slips his hand around his side, spanning across his waist and rucking his tee shirt up. Jonathan giggles, finally, batting at him, and tries to shove his hand away.

“Steve!”

Steve digs his fingers into his side, and Jonathan makes a high-pitched noise, laughing and bringing his knees up, trying to stop him.

“Knock it off,” he manages breathlessly. He turns on his side, digging his own fingers into Steve’s side. Steve chokes on a laugh, curling up on his side. Steve knocks into him, and before he knows it, Jonathan is on top of him, breathlessly laughing. His tee shirt is still rucked up to his underarms, and Steve drags his fingers down his exposed sides. Jonathan yelps, curling up, and Steve takes the opportunity to push at him gently until he’s on his back on the ground again, and kneels, one knee on both sides of him. Jonathan grabs his wrists, still smiling.

Steve feels the laughter bubble into his chest as he tries to get his hands back to him, but Jonathan is deceptively strong, he’s finding, and holding fast. The play fight drains out of him quickly, and instead, finds himself breathless, smiling, staring down at him. He sits back on him, and Jonathan lets a soft giggle out every few seconds still. His hands are still wrapped around Steve’s wrists.

The change in the air from earlier heightens, and Steve sucks in a harsh breath. He wriggles his hands down Jonathan’s, until they’re palm to palm, and laces their fingers together.

He waits.

Jonathan doesn’t make any moves, tilting his head against the concrete instead, watching him curiously. He blinks up at him, and Steve leans down a little. He hovers a few inches from his face,

Jonathan's hands holding him up slightly by his own. He searches his face, feeling his eyes widen when Jonathan nods.

Steve lets himself lean the rest of the way, pressing his lips to his. He hears a surprised gasp, and lets go of Jonathan's hands. He rests them on his shoulders lightly, and grins a little against his lips when he feels them part. He feels his hands run up his sides and he shudders under the touch. He presses into him harder when he feels him pull his shirt from his shorts, pulling it up, and slides his hands under the fabric. His hands are warm, and Steve can't stop the noise he makes.

He's the first to break the kiss, knocking his forehead against his. Jonathan's hands slide until they're around the small of his back and settle there. Steve laughs, breathless.

“Well, damn, Byers.”

Jonathan giggles under him. Steve lifts his head, smiling. He brings his arms up, resting them beside Jonathan's head. Jonathan turns his head into his forearm, nosing against the skin. He has one eye open, looking at him, grin on his face. He's flushed, and Steve thinks he could get used to it.

He threads his fingers through the silk strands of hair, watching as he shuts the one visible eye.

“Shoulda fuckin' told me,” Jonathan mumbles against his arm. Steve feels him wrap his arms around his upper back, sighing.

He leans down, pressing his nose into his neck, nodding. He inhales gently, taking in the scent of him. He smells like the Hawkins' night air, the Byers home, and vaguely of stale popcorn from the theater. Steve shrugs.

“I wasn't sure. I wanted to be sure.”

He lifts his head, eyes locking with Jonathan's. The other boy lifts a hand, lip between his teeth, and cards it through Steve's hair. He sighs, shutting his eyes and leaning into it.

“So all my flirting the past few months weren't a dead

giveaway?”

Steve bursts out laughing, shaking his head. Jonathan’s fingers tangle in his hair, and he can feel him shaking under him in laughter.

“You call that flirting? Jesus, Jonathan.”

“I didn’t say I was good at it.”

Steve cracks his eyes open, smiling down at him. “I’m really glad you’re here right now.”

Jonathan’s smile widens. “Me, too.”

He presses a quick kiss to his lips, suddenly very acutely aware that it’s something he can do now. He lets his forehead drop to meet his, and he pushes strands away from his eyes. He sighs, burying his face back into his neck. A few moments pass, and then a sudden realization hits him. He swallows thickly, shutting his eyes.

“Shit.”

“What?”

“You’re leaving.”

He hears Jonathan make a soft noise and he’s being pulled tighter against him.

“Not until August. And Mom wants me home every other weekend. And holidays. And Thanksgiving and winter breaks, and Spring break—“

Steve smiles. “Okay, okay.”

Jonathan prods him in the side. “And when I’m home, I’ll come and see you and I’ll call you.”

Steve looks up. “Every day?”

Jonathan nods, and Steve feels his cheek against the top of

his head.

“Yeah, every day.” He pauses, kissing his cheek. “Also Nancy told me if I didn’t call you guys every day, she’d come find me and staple the phone to my face as a reminder.”

Steve chokes. “Jesus.”

“Yeah,” Jonathan laughs.

Steve lifts his head some, pulling himself further up until he’s face to face with him.

“You might have to come find me at Hopper’s station.” Jonathan’s brow furrows and he tilts his head. Steve sits up, and settles back on Jonathan’s legs. He fixes his hair, then puffs his chest a little, hands on his hips. “I join the academy in September. So. You’re looking at one of Hawkins’ future finest.”

Jonathan’s eyes go comically wide and he sits up on his elbows. Steve watches him for a moment, can see the small tick of his eyes as he studies him.

“Wait-“

“Yeah.”

Jonathan exhales sharply, smiling wider than anything Steve’s ever seen. Jonathan knocks him off his legs, and Steve laughs as he scrambles to tackle him to the ground. Steve feels him lay into him, arms wrapping around him, laughing. He wraps his arms around a thin body, feels Jonathan’s hands dig into his shoulders.

“Steve, that’s great!”

Steve sighs, letting his head drop to the cement. He feels Jonathan press a kiss to his cheek and he smiles.

“Figured it was time to get my shit together.”

Jonathan lifts his head and Steve meets dark brown eyes. His skin is crinkled up by his eyes, full smile on his face. He looks wild,

happy.

Beautiful crosses Steve's mind.

“I’m really. Wow, Steve. Just. Man, I’m proud of you.”

Steve feels his chest explode with pride and he tilts his head.

“Yeah?”

“Yeah.” Steve hears him giggle. “Officer Steve.”

Steve rolls his eyes, letting his fingers trail down his sides and digs them in. Jonathan yelps, trying to curl up on him, giggling into his chest.

“Knock it off.”

Steve rolls his head on the ground, rough surface digging into his scalp, and hums. He feels Jonathan press his face into his neck and he hugs him tighter. They lapse back into silence, and he feels Jonathan slap at his own back, arm twisting backward. Steve feels him grab his arm, and he lets it fall limply to his side. He feels fingers entwine with his own, bony and thin, but warm. He turns his head, finding his hair and hums a few bars of “Save It For Later.”

He hears Jonathan huff softly into his neck and he feels the puff of warm breath on his skin. “I hope you like the mix tape.”

Steve nods. “We should. Maybe. Go upstairs. Listen to the rest of it.”

Jonathan slowly lifts his head. “Upstairs?”

Steve shrugs when he catches his eyes. He purses his lips, lifting a hand to push Jonathan’s hair from his face again.

“Yeah. Why don’t you stay the night?” Jonathan turns bright red, pushing his face back into his neck and Steve laughs. He feels warm, bright, and content for the first time in a while. “Could you stay the night?”

“Yeah, yeah, I can. I’d like to.”

Steve feels his own heartbeat start racing. “Good. Now get off me so we can go.”

Jonathan laughs, slapping a fist on his chest. “Fine, fine. Getting up.”

Steve immediately feels cold when he slides off of him, sitting up on his thighs, mirroring Steve’s position on him only minutes before. He watches him slide a hand through his hair, and Steve tilts his head, taking him in. He watches the rays of moonlight on his hair, water reflection dancing on his face, and he inhales sharply when Jonathan turns soft eyes on him, smirking. His hand is still threaded in his hair, and he glances down shyly. Steve runs hands up his sides, then his arms, and he watches as Jonathan follows them.

“Upstairs?” he murmurs.

Jonathan nods. “Yeah.”

He slips off of Steve a little shakily, grabbing his bag, his shoes, and the Walkman. Steve stands, grabbing the bag of chips and the empty cans. He tosses them in the bin by the door, then grabs the photo album by the pool. Steve swallows, entering the house. He turns off the lights and locks the door behind him. He follows Jonathan down the foyer, and gestures to the stairs. Jonathan turns back to smile at him, shouldering his bag, and Steve smiles back, resting a hand on his back as he makes his way up the stairs. Steve shows him to the door, opening it. Jonathan looks around the room, and Steve takes the Walkman from him. He transfers the tape to the player in the corner, and presses play. It picks up where it left off, and he lowers the volume. He sees Jonathan set his bag down, and put his shoes near his desk. Steve settles onto the bed, and Jonathan slips in beside him.

Queen drifts from the stereo and Steve feels him curl against his side.

“We have some catching up to do before you leave.”

Jonathan laughs, wrapping an arm around his chest, and Steve turns toward him, smiling. He presses his lips to his again, and feels Jonathan hum against his mouth.

He lets the music come in waves over him, and he shuts his eyes.

He feels hands in his hair and warmth and smells chlorine and Jonathan. He feels the jump in Jonathan's pulse on his neck when he puts his hand there, and finally.

Finally, he feels happy.

Author's Note:

GUYS. WE ARE ALMOST TO SEASON 2. COME FIND ME ON TUMBLR WHERE I WILL BE ALTERNATING BETWEEN UGLY SOBBING AND SHRIEKING.

<https://www.tumblr.com/blog/justlikeregularchickens>